

Society of American Archivists
American Archivist Editorial Board
Zoom Meeting | March 22, 2021

MINUTES

In attendance: Amy Cooper Cary (Chair), Bethany Anderson (Reviews Editor), Sumayya Ahmed, Carrie Daniels, Ben Goldman, Katharina Hering, Eric Hung, Jessica Lacher-Feldman, Alison Trulock, Grace Moran (early-career member), Stacie Williams (Publications Editor), Mario Ramirez (Council Liaison), and SAA staff Teresa Brinati and Abigail Christian.

Unable to attend: Shadrack Katuu, Kate Puerini, Sylvia Welsh, and early-career members Asa Espanto and Bridgette Hammond.

I. Welcome – Amy Cooper Cary, Editor

II. Brief Updates

A. Reviews Editor – Bethany Anderson

Anderson is finishing reviews for the Spring/Summer 2021 issue. The Reviews Portal has had a number of new submissions lately, including a review of Zoom for oral histories, as well as reviews of the Syrian Archives and Collective Responsibility Labor Advocacy Toolkit. The Editorial Board is welcome to let Anderson know of other books and resources that the journal or Reviews Portal should consider reviewing.

B. Hidden Content Project – Grace Moran, Katharina Hering

Moran reported that she, Asa Espanto, and Bridgette Hammond have been busy going through content (they're in the 1950s now!), determining what should be pulled out to be further highlighted, and making decisions for upper-level categorization. The team plan to eventually write an article for the journal or *Archival Outlook* about the process.

C. Publications Editor – Stacie Williams

- i. Several books are in production, including *Archival Accessioning*, *Managing Business Archives*, and *Museum Archives*, projected to be available in 2021. Several proposals for new manuscripts on disability and accessibility, teaching with primary sources, and digitization are in progress.
- ii. The Publications Board's One Book, One Profession event is Thursday, March 25. The event features the author of SAA's book *A Matter of Facts*. More than 400 people have RSVP'd for the event.

D. Council – Mario Ramirez

The task force on diversity and inclusion and cultural competency training that the Board first brought to the SAA Council's attention is expanding to take on a larger role across the association versus just the Editorial Board. The SAA Council will discuss more at its meeting in May.

III. Issue Updates & Manuscript Submissions

- A. **84.1 (Spring/Summer 2021):** This issue is taking shape. It will be the first digital-only issue.
- B. **84.2 (Fall/Winter 2021):** This issue is also far along in its progress. It includes a special section on Design Records, which is guest edited by Karen Trivette.

IV. Discussion Items

A. [SAA Dataverse](#) (see also [CORDA announcement](#))

- i. Cooper Cary met with the team behind the SAA Dataverse to explore the ongoing relationship between the data depository being created by CORDA and its potential use in the Editorial review process. This was an exploratory discussion. The Board discussed the questions:
 - Are datasets useful as evaluation tools for peer review? Why or why not?
 - Authors do not include *all* data gathered during research in their articles. Where in the process would it be useful for peer reviewers to know that a dataset will be (or is) included in Dataverse?
 - Should we reflect evaluation of dataset in the peer review process? What change to the rubric would be necessary?
- ii. Issues brought out during the conversation:
 - Datasets might be most useful at the outset of the submission process and to peer reviewers in their work.
 - What are barriers to authors for inclusion of datasets in the Dataverse?
 - Would authors know that their datasets would be included prior to submission?
 - Should we make dataset contribution a requirement or optional? Is there a potential barrier to publication if there is a requirement?
 - Although data sets could be used to fact check if a conclusion or comment didn't make sense or the peer reviewer had questions, peer reviewers should not have to use the dataset to figure out the article—research in the article should be clear. At the same time, the dataset could be a good check for bias.
 - Data sets could be a great draw to bring people to the *American Archivist* website after an article has been published—the data sets could be used for secondary research or to continue the research conversation.
 - Does sufficient information about the creation of the dataset allow for better evaluation?
 - What do we need in a rubric if we are going to include consideration of datasets?
- iii. This is an ongoing conversation. Cooper Cary will take these thoughts back to the Dataverse team, and the Board can continue to think about how the journal might make use of this project or refine procedures moving forward.

B. **Process Improvements to Peer Review**

- i. The Board discussed the peer review process, sharing experiences with writing reviews, and some of the problems that come up in the process. Many noted that the editorial process is an intensively evaluative effort and can take a great deal of time to offer constructive feedback.
- ii. A few questions/considerations that came up:
 - How does the editorial process impact DEIA (our ongoing theme)? Reviews may not always be a good fit with the issues that the author is addressing, because of insufficient background of the reviewer.
 - Everyone has barriers to being able to accept reviews at any given time. Cary is always open to conversation about this.
 - How can the Board consistently offer review comments that help authors improve their articles (regardless of whether they are accepted for publication)....

- Not all peer reviewers who come from outside the Board will provide quality reviews. How to help people write good reviews?
- What measures might aid the Editor in the assignment of peer review responsibilities?
- The peer review platform has a rubric with a numeric score of 100, but it is not something that is often used, so is this a helpful part of the rubric? The Board would have to agree on weights for each element of the rubric and review the rubric for bias.
- One Board member commented that when writing articles, the peer review process has typically been unhelpful in revising and they're not sure that this process makes articles better. It can also make it harder for innovative work to get through peer review process. They advocated for an open review process versus a blind review process, as an open process allows for more conversation between reviewer and writer. Other members agreed or weren't necessarily convinced—but all felt that it would be good to talk further about the pros and cons of both.

C. July 2021 Virtual Meeting

The next Editorial Board meeting will be in July during the Annual Meeting. It will be a 3-hour meeting (with breaks) and will need to start relatively early to accommodate Board members from all time zones. Stay tuned for more details.